

Town of Mansfield
CONSERVATION COMMISSION
Meeting of 20 April 2011
Conference B, Audrey P. Beck Building
MINUTES

Members present: Joan Buck (Alt.), Quentin Kessel, Scott Lehmann, John Silander. *Members absent:* Robert Dahn, Peter Drzewiecki, Neil Facchinetti (Alt.), Frank Trainor. *Others present:* Grant Meitzler (Wetlands Agent).

1. The meeting was **called to order** at 7:38p by Chair Quentin Kessel.
2. The draft **minutes of the 16 March 2011 meeting** were approved as written.
3. A public hearing on **W1474 (Plimpton, Wormwood Hill & Gurleyville Rds)** has been scheduled for 2 May. The Commission sees no need to enlarge upon its previous comment (Minutes of 16 March 2011, item 3a).
4. UConn has released its **March 2011 Draft Water Supply Plan**, which (a) estimates the water needs of the University (and other users supplied by its system) through 2060 and (b) surveys and assesses various options for meeting this demand with a margin of safety of 1.15 (= ratio of supply to demand). Currently, the system's water is supplied by wells in aquifers along the Willimantic and Fenton Rivers. Low rainfall in late summer and early fall limits supply just when demand increases with the return of students; in fall 2010, the University operated under a water emergency as the system's margin of safety dropped below 1.0. Shortfalls of a few days duration can be covered by water stored in tanks; those of longer duration require reducing demand or increasing supply. In the short to medium term, the University proposes to reduce demand, mainly by reclaiming water (i.e., re-using treated water) for heating, cooling, and irrigation. In the longer term, additional supplies must be secured, perhaps by relocating wells in the Willimantic aquifer, more probably by importing water from elsewhere (e.g., Mansfield Hollow or Shenipsit Reservoirs).

Town comments on the Draft Plan are due by 26 April. After some discussion, the Commission agreed unanimously on the following motion (Buck, Silander):

The Commission authorizes its Chair to prepare a letter to the Mansfield Town Council covering the issues discussed, to be circulated by e-mail for editorial comments/changes before forwarding to the Town Planner for incorporation into the Town's comments on the Draft University of Connecticut Water Supply Plan.

The "issues discussed" include (a) concurrence with the Willimantic River Alliance's comment, (b) additional historical background on the water supply problem, (c) moving Fenton Well A farther from the river to limit 'induced infiltration,' as recommended in the University's Fenton River study, and (d) protecting water quality in Fenton Well D by avoiding diversion of storm runoff to Roberts Brook.

5. A public hearing on proposed **revisions to the Mansfield Zoning Regulations** will be held on 16 May. These are additions to or elaborations of existing regulations, and appear not to raise any significant issues of interest to the Commission. Kessel may offer an individual comment on lighting provisions (V.A.3.d.17, V.A.5.g, X.A.11.g), based on what he learned at the 28 February Green Valley Institute presentation on light pollution.

6. The wheel of fortune turns again for **Ponde Place**. According to Meitzler, 2 of 3 monitoring wells drilled near Meadowbrook Lane (to assess the impact on neighborhood wells of extracting water from a new well on the property) have struck water and appear capable of supplying 20 gpm each. The developers are now applying to have the two wells approved as production wells, enabling the project to be scaled back up in size. It is not yet clear whether substantial withdrawals would draw in contaminants from the old UConn chemical landfill.

7. A public hearing on a zoning permit for the proposed **Storrs Center parking garage/bus station** is scheduled for 4 May. The Commission has nothing – save perhaps a hope that this facility will permit people to park their cars and wait for a bus inside, out of the weather – to add to its 18 April 2007 comment on the proposed Storrs Center project (PZC 1256-57), regarding provisions for preserving open space and protecting water quality & wildlife.

8. The Town Council has agreed to the **Natchaug River Basin Conservation Compact**. Kessel plans to attend a signing ceremony in Chaplin on 29 April.

9. The Commission is pleased to learn from the Town Manager's recent report to the Town Council of "a strong group of finalists" for the **position of Director of Planning and Development** (aka "Town Planner"), to succeed Greg Padick, who is retiring in June. Inasmuch as the Town Planner influences the balance between conservation and development in Mansfield, the Commission observes that it would have been appropriate to include a representative from it on the interview panel.

10. Adjourned at 8:47p.

Scott Lehmann, Secretary, 21 April 2011; approved 18 May 2011.